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The American Institute of Sacred Literature

A PROFESSIONAL READING COURSE ON THE EFFICIENT CHURCH

No subject is more in the public eye than education. Amid all the divergent views as to the technique and principles of education nothing is more evident than the growing conviction that the new emphasis must be laid upon education in morals. As to just what institutions are to undertake this task there is difference of opinion. Many claim that the public school can be counted upon to help in such a task; but all are agreed that the church must be the primary source of moral inspiration and instruction. In the following pages SHAILER MATHEWS, of the University of Chicago, discusses certain books dealing with this vital subject. Inquiries concerning books, traveling libraries, and issues of the BIBLICAL WORLD containing previous outlines should be directed to the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE. It is hoped that this reading course will be of particular help to ministers and Sunday-school teachers.

THE SECOND ELEMENT OF EFFICIENCY—ORGANIZATION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Protestantism has too frequently centered its attention upon the adult. Its theologies have largely been constructed upon the supposition that religious experience is essentially mature; yet at the same time it has for the last century steadily increased the emphasis it has laid upon the Sunday school. In so doing it has more closely recognized its educational function. Revivals and special appeals to those who have already partially formed their beliefs and habits are indispensable for church efficiency, as will appear in a later study, but the educational process is certainly the more conservative and fruitful.

The modern Protestant church is truly more keenly alive to this duty and the interest in its educational problem is continually growing more widespread and intelligent. In this new attitude there is every ground for encouragement, but there still remains the need of more thoroughly organizing the educational activities in the church, and of realizing the supreme value of spiritual growth as opposed to religious revolution. Too many churches are spending more money on a church choir than they are on the Sunday school and yet their very future

depends upon their success in producing Christian lives from Sunday-school classes.

Education is certainly more than giving information. Information of course must be given, but in religious processes we need to distinguish carefully between a knowledge about the Bible and a definite unfolding of the religious life under the guidance of biblical ideals. It is this broad conception of education as involving proper methods in teaching and work, but just as truly of the need of training the activities of the child, that the volumes selected for consideration would emphasize.

The first volume is that by the president of Brown University, W. H. P. Faunce, *The Educational Ideal in the Ministry*. The volume is composed of eight lectures and has preserved much of the charm of the author's spoken words. President Faunce is thoroughly abreast of the results of educational theory and at the same time has had a notable success as a pastor. His experience therefore fits him admirably for emphasizing the great task which the clergyman must face. To this end he begins his discussion with an appreciation of the place of the minister in modern life. This he finds, not in the olden-time authority of the Puritan minister, but in the need that society should have someone to set forth the real significance of Christ to the community. Dr. Faunce very properly distinguishes this sense of the value of Christ and his standards from any particular theory about his origin and character. The great task of the minister is to educate people to the point in which Christ's standards are their own. Once possessed of them they may move on to any phase of social service. But this is an educational task.

The difficulty which an open-minded minister faces when he comes to educate his church in the new appreciation of the Scriptures and Christianity is given sympathetic treatment. The need of the minister's thinking of God in terms of modern science if he is to appeal to a modern world is especially treated. The man who can read Dr. Faunce's words without feeling that God is still at work is certainly irresponsible to modern prophets. Particularly significant is the chapter on "The Direction of Religious Education." In this President Faunce comes more closely into touch with the actual task of the preacher as affected by the work of the church. It is a helpful chapter with all its criticism. It makes a number of suggestions as to practical methods, but the prevailing thought of the chapter is expressed in this striking sentence, which is the key to the entire work: "To explain Christ's attitude

toward God and man, toward the family and the church, toward knowledge and joy and sacrifice and death and eternity, to show what it means to enter into that attitude so as again to say, 'Christ liveth in me'—that is the endless task of the Christian preacher." This, too, is an educational task.

Nor does the volume leave the minister outside the general sweep of education as it exists in colleges and schools, in labor unions and political discussions. In all of these means of education he is to have a part, not for the sake of debate or for the sake of domineering, but for the sake of participating and so evangelizing the educational forces of the entire community.

It is impossible for any one at all acquainted with the needs of Protestant churches to fail to see the vital significance of such a conception of the minister's work. Too many churches have been ruined because the preacher wished quick rather than abiding results. Popularity is not necessarily evidence of permanent influence. The minister who cannot patiently face his problem and *train* men to occupy his own Christ-centered point of view is not facing the educational task involved in an efficient ministry.

The Pedagogical Bible School, by Samuel B. Haslett, Ph.D., is described by the author as "a scientific study of the Sunday school with chief reference to the curriculum." This description is accurate. In Part I the author traces the history of the Sunday school; in Part II he discusses adolescence in considerable detail; and in Part III he discusses the curriculum as adjusted to the nature of the child. The volume was published in 1903 and so does not bring the history of the Sunday school quite down to date. The last few years have shown very decided advances in a number of departments of Sunday-school work, but Part II is permanently valuable. The volume is affected by the interests of G. Stanley Hall, with whom the author studied. It is natural, therefore, that particular attention should be paid to the physical characteristics of young people. The general criticism that is to be passed on all of the religious psychology that is produced under the influence of Dr. Hall is the tendency to over-magnify the sex instincts. Dr. Haslett avoids this to a very considerable extent, but does not altogether avoid temptation. Based as his conclusions are largely upon questionnaires, they are subject to the modification which that method demands, namely, questionnaires disclose the characteristics of the man who answers questionnaires and he constitutes a class by himself. Dr. Haslett has given in the discussion any number of interesting

anecdotes which will serve at least to suggest questions for any minister or Sunday-school teacher who wishes to be really acquainted with the needs of adolescents. The last few years have made very much more common the belief that young people are not thoroughly adult, but this volume has still an important message in this particular. We particularly would call attention to the section which deals with the simultaneous existence of contradictory tendencies in adolescent life.

In Part III the author moves over into the application of general psychological principles to the building up of a philosophy of the Sunday-school curriculum. On pp. 216-21 there is a capital summary of the "recapitulation" theory as a basis of a method for religious instruction. At the same time there is full recognition given such elements as environment or social conditions in which pupils are growing up. On pp. 233 f. are given the principles which should govern in the building up of a Bible course of study. These principles would not seem particularly revolutionary to those who are familiar with the recent advances in Sunday-school curricula, but they are none the less highly important and well stated from the point of view of psychology. The volume at this point is not as elaborate or as conclusive as the volume by Pease entitled *An Outline of a Bible-School Curriculum*. It is interesting, however, to see how on the basis of his principles the author arrives at many of the same conclusions as other students of the problem who have worked independently. The latter part of the book is filled with a number of suggestions for advance courses for more mature students. The chief value of the book is, however, not in its suggestions as to curricula, but in its presentation of psychological principles such as every pastor and Sunday-school teacher ought to know.

A different book both in method and in principle is *The Modern Sunday School in Principle and Practice*, by H. F. Cope, general secretary of the Religious Education Association. Instead of presenting an elaborate psychological study, after a brief introductory history of the Sunday school it passes to such definite matters as officers, equipment, manual training, discipline, finances, libraries, etc. It is a thoroughly practical volume and well merits the study of all those who actually wish to make the Sunday school efficient. The chapter on officers and their duties, for example, describes an organization which, although on paper seems somewhat elaborate, when once fairly studied is seen to be thoroughly business-like. The chapter on the pastor and the Sunday school is not so detailed as to obscure some general principles which must rule in every Sunday school. Chap. VII gives practical directions for the

grading of a Sunday school, and these on the whole seem workable. The chief caution which should be given in this connection is, however, the need of remembering that paper constitutions will not walk of themselves. Many a Sunday school has been graded well on paper which is very confused in practice. Mr. Cope's directions, both in this regard and other matters, are eminently sane. A school organized on the general lines which he indicates would almost inevitably become more efficient.

In reading these and similar volumes one will do well to remember that efficiency in the Sunday school as well as in every branch of the church will depend ultimately on the quality of life that goes into its management. Ideals are indispensable, but they have to be embodied in practical-minded people before they amount to much. A thoroughly devoted Sunday-school teacher will be able to accomplish many good things wholly apart from any knowledge of the laws of psychology. But this is only one side, and is only to say that any strong person will accomplish things individually simply because of his strength. This by no means obviates the necessity of a Sunday school being conducted methodically. A Sunday school is not an individual; it is an institution, and must be conducted as an institution. It is at this point that something like scientific management as set forth in Mr. Cope's book is really important. If strong lives can be so combined and directed the results will be doubly satisfactory.

There is one fallacy which sometimes creeps into discussions of religious education, namely, that methods which have been successful in secular education can be transferred bodily into the Sunday school. The difficulty here lies obviously in the fact that the primary object of the Sunday school is the production of character, while that of the day school is giving information with the hope that it may produce good citizens. At points both endeavors are the same, but there is no more reason why character should result from good historical information about the Bible than about any other subject. One criticism that is to be passed upon many attempts at Sunday-school reformation is that the attempts have been concentrated upon the question of materials of religious education. Such emphasis was undoubtedly a necessary phase in the reorganization of religious instruction, but it would be a serious mistake to let the ideal of educational efficiency stop at this point. There must be added to this reorganization of the materials of education a full and equally systematic study of the practice of religion, the inculcation of doctrine, the training in practical altruism. In our

zeal for better instruction in the Sunday school we should be careful not to lose sight of the element of efficiency which the Sunday school always possessed in actually evoking spiritual life. In the same proportion as the Sunday school in the past has been an actual force in the life of the church will the conservation of the desirable things of the older type of Sunday school be desirable.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is, in your opinion, the main purpose of the Sunday school?
2. What modifications in the organization of the Sunday school have been made necessary by the development of the day school?
3. Is there necessarily any loss of unity in a thoroughly graded Sunday school?
4. Should there be any radically different method of organization to hold the children, the adolescent and the adult members of the Sunday school?
5. What share should the minister have in determining the character of the education given in the Sunday school?
6. Has the minister time to give to the direction of the educational activities of his church?
7. In the church with two or more ministers is it best that the educational work be delegated wholly to one of them?

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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